



City of Lowell - Planning Board

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 7, 2022 6:30 p.m.

City Council Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall

City of Lowell, 375 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA

Remote Participation Optional via Zoom

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit www.ltc.org

Members Present

Thomas Linnehan, Chairman

Gerard Frechette, Vice Chairman

Robert Malavich, Member

Richard Lockhart, Member

Caleb Cheng, Member

Members Absent

Sinead Gallivan, Associate Member

Others Present

Dylan Ricker, Associate Planner

A quorum of the Board was present. Chairman Linnehan called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

I. Minutes for Approval

October 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes

G. Frechette motioned, and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to approve the October 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

II. Continued Business

Site Plan Review and Special Permit – 35 Varum Avenue, 01854

House of Hope, Inc. has applied to the Planning Board seeking Site Plan Review and Special Permit approval to construct an eight (8) unit apartment building at 35 Varum Avenue. The property is located in the Traditional Single-Family (TSF) zoning district. The project requires Planning Board approval for Site Plan Review under Section 11.4, Special Permit approval to extend the existing non-conforming use per Section 4.5.2, and Special Permit approval per Section 6.7.2 for maximum driveway length.

On Behalf:

Jacob Taylor, Applicant's Representative

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

T. Linnehan stated the applicant has requested a continuance until after the applicant's Zoning Board hearing.

Motion:

T. Linnehan motioned, and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to continue the application to the December 5, 2022 Planning Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

III. New Business

Site Plan Review and Special Permit – 776 Lakeview Avenue, 01850

Louis Gagnon has applied to the Lowell Planning Board seeking Special Permit approval and amendment to their Site Plan Review approval to convert the first floor of the existing building into three (3) residential units and two (2) commercial units. The subject property is located in the Neighborhood Business (NB) zoning district. The applicant previously received Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals approval to convert the second and third floors into ten (1) residential units. The proposal requires a Site Plan Review Amendment per Section 11.4.2, and Special Permit Approval per Article 12.q from the Lowell Planning Board.

G. Frechette recused himself from the application.

On Behalf:

Peter Marlowe, Applicant's Representative

P. Marlowe summarized the prior Planning Board and Zoning Board approvals for the proposal. P. Marlowe said the permits were pulled and work has started on the work that was previously approved. P. Marlowe said the applicant is petitioning to increase the total units as the applicant has decided to retire and close the family hardware store. P. Marlowe said the change will convert the front facing portion of the building into 2 commercial units, and there will be 3 ADA accessible residential units. P. Marlowe noted the City is in need of these type of units.

P. Marlowe said the applicant has met with the Engineering Department to meet their concerns. P. Marlowe said there were some issues with financing due to the pandemic which delayed this application along with cost increases.

P. Marlowe said there is a new lighting plan, a typical landscaping plan and he is willing to work with the City to address their concerns.

Speaking in Favor:

Anne Marie Page, 26 Fremont Street, Lowell, MA

A. Page said that of the P. Marlowe's projects in the area have been great and improved the neighborhood. A. Page noted P. Marlowe's past successes at improving properties. A. Page added that P. Marlowe maintains his properties well and the neighborhood is fortunate to have his investment.

Michelle Page, Lowell MA / Belfast, Northern Ireland

M. Page noted P. Marlowe has successfully improved multiple properties in the neighborhood. M. Page said that P. Marlowe's past work has improved the City and expressed support for the proposal.

Speaking in Opposition:

Roger Nash, West Street, Lowell, MA

R. Nash expressed concern about parking and said the area is getting limited on parking. R. Nash said his only concern is parking.

Discussion:

T. Linnehan said the approval requires 4 votes and gave the applicant the option of moving forward today or requesting a continuance to the next Planning Board meeting. P. Marlowe said they are prepared to proceed today.

R. Lockhart said the memo said the parking area will be in view of the park and should be screened from the park. P. Marlowe said he could use furs, blue spruces, or some type of evergreen to screen the park and he would work with DPD to address this concern.

R. Lockhart noted the Transportation Engineer's comments. P. Marlowe said the revised Site Plan designates the subject spaces as handicap parking spaces. P. Marlowe said the new island will be extended to be level with the crosswalk and won't be viewed as a driveway. P. Marlowe said the area between spot 8 and the crosswalk will not be used for snow storage.

R. Lockhart asked for confirmation that the applicant has obtained a stormwater permit from LRWWU. P. Marlowe confirmed and said changes were made at the request of LRWWU.

C. Cheng asked if the entire parking area will be paved. P. Marlowe confirmed this and said there will be underground drainage chambers. C. Chang said a place for plantings could be the Lakeview Ave street front. P. Marlowe said they could do that to reach the 5% landscaping required. C. Cheng asked about the purpose of the gap there otherwise. P. Marlowe said it's great to have landscaping but it can make snow storage challenging. P. Marlowe said if requested by the Board he is amenable to the requirement. C. Cheng expressed support for a condition requiring this area be landscaped.

C. Cheng expressed support for similar plantings on Lakeview Ave. P. Marlowe agreed as a condition. C. Cheng asked about the lighting plan, specifically the light on the National Grid lighting pole. P. Marlowe said the light is large and lights up the whole lot and lights the garbage area. P. Marlowe said the only area it does not light is behind the 768 Lakeview Ave building, but additional lighting will be added there. P. Marlowe said the existing street light is broken but could be repaired. C.

Cheng expressed support for a condition requiring DPD approval of the lighting plan. P. Marlowe agreed.

C. Cheng asked if there were any glare concerns. P. Marlowe said they have not had any complaints.

R. Malavich asked how a garbage truck will access the dumpster site when the lot is full due to tight access points. P. Marlowe said it is a truckloaded dumpster which is accessed from Island Street. P. Marlowe said they may have to adjust the area to make it accessible for the garbage truck. R. Malavich noted that snow cannot be stored in front of the dumpster since it would make it inaccessible.

R. Malavich agreed with the condition adding landscaping along Lakeview Ave and is satisfied with the lighting plan.

T. Linnehan said he would like DPD to review the lighting, and landscaping plan and have the Transportation Engineer review the handicap spots and snow storage. T. Linnehan said the additional landscaping would be helpful. T. Linnehan noted the Traffic Engineer did not have concerns about the parking and expressed support for adding ADA accessible units.

Motion:

T. Linnehan motioned to approve the Site Plan Review application with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall provide an updated landscaping plan with adequate screening for the park and adding landscaping to the Lakeview Ave frontage to meet the 5% landscaping requirement subject to DPD approval;
2. The applicant shall provide a lighting plan subject to DPD approval; and
3. The applicant shall obtain Transportation Engineer approval for the parking layout and dumpster access.

R. Lockhart seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, (4-0).

T. Linnehan motioned to approve the Special Permit with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall provide an updated landscaping plan with adequate screening for the park and adding landscaping to the Lakeview Ave frontage to meet the 5% landscaping requirement subject to DPD approval;
2. The applicant shall provide a lighting plan subject to DPD approval; and
3. The applicant shall obtain Transportation Engineer approval for the parking layout and dumpster access.

C. Cheng seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, (4-0).

III. Other Business

Approve 2023 Schedule

The Planning Board will vote to approve the 2023 Planning Board schedule.

T. Linnehan said in the past the Planning Board has had their second meeting of September on a Thursday since he has a volunteering commitment on the Monday, but would leave this decision up to the fellow Board members.

G. Frechette motioned to approve the 2023 Planning Board schedule with the following condition:

1. The second meeting of September will be moved to Thursday, September 21, 2023.

R. Malavich seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

IV. Notices

V. Further Comments from Planning Board Members

VI. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by C. Cheng, seconded by R. Malavich. The vote was unanimous (5-0). The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 PM.